

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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EXCHANGE ENRICHES
COMPANION BOND

(Editor's Note: In recent years, the Executive Council has ratified 11 companion diocese relationships between dioceses of the Episcopal Church and dioceses or provinces of the worldwide Anglican Communion. The relationship between the Diocese of Long Island and the Lusitanian Church in Portugal is an especially active one and was enhanced this year through a conference in Europe and a visit by the Lusitanian bishop the Rt. Rev. Luis C.R. Pereira to Long Island. The learnings from that relationship are explored in these excerpts from Tidings, the diocesan newspaper.)

By Bonnie Jo Hilligoss
Editor, Tidings, Diocese of Long Island

GARDEN CITY, N.Y. -- With hands reaching across the Atlantic, the Lusitanian Church and its companion Diocese of Long Island share common goals for the growth of renewal and evangelism.

"Although our countries have dramatic cultural differences, both of our Churches are being renewed and are growing through evangelism," relates Bishop Luis C.R. Pereira, during a recent visit to the diocese.

"Portugal is an underdeveloped country and we must implement our concepts of evangelism in different ways than in the United States," he explains. Although the Church is actively working in Christian education, youth ministries and scouting, its most effective outreach comes through the clergy.

Only the bishop and four other clergy receive any stipend and all other priests work in other professions such as business, finance and medicine. Although this arrangement is necessitated by a lack of financial resources, Bishop Pereira explains, "The ministry of the Church has a presence in places where a priest normally would not get in. This opportunity for evangelism would not happen if he were not a working priest. He becomes a visible symbol of the Church."

A lack of public transportation, scarcity of cars and a \$4-per-gallon price for gasoline limit travel and the ability of the Church to have group functions which nurture the renewal of the American Church.

"Our country has a longer history than yours, also. We were part of a kingdom in 1140. Our renewal places the Eucharist very much in the center of the special services we observe. It might be of interest to your people to know that we have been strongly influenced by the American liturgical committee and recently adopted your catechism which was printed in Portugese this year through the companion relationship," Bishop Pereira told Tidings.

The Portugese bishop, a physician and former Roman Catholic, joined the Anglican Church in 1948 after spending 18 years as a lay minister. He explains that 95 percent of his former Church is "nominally Roman Catholic," with a national average of 25 percent attending mass and only 3 percent in the rural south.

"I came back to the Catholic Church but not the Roman Catholic Church," he recalls. "Why? Because I felt the liturgy (of the Anglican Church) is the true expression of the Catholic Church in which I could find my spiritual home...a true ministry."

Bishop Pereira has found this, his fifth trip to the United States, to be an "enriching experience." Through his numerous visits with individuals and parishes in the diocese he has not only shared his wisdom and the grateful outreach of his own country but has gained valuable knowledge in "how larger dioceses are driven" and returns to Portugal with many "ideas about Christian education and liturgy."

The companionship between the Lusitanian Church and the Diocese of Long Island is viewed nationally as a model for establishment and operation of a Partners in Mission exchange. Bishop Pereira expressed gratitude to the diocese and to his good friends Bishop Robert C. Witcher and the Rev. Canon E.W. Olifiers whose personal commitment made the companionship possible.

"We belong...we have a family...someone cares for us in a special way. This is a great thing for a minority Church," he attests.

"For over 100 years, we have suffered from isolation. (Even though) we were kindly visited by the Irish bishop who performed confirmations and communions...that doesn't break our isolation."

"Something finally happened in 1961 when a relationship was established between your Church and our Church. I am never tired of saying that the American Episcopal Church was the first Anglican Church to break the ice."

"But, to have you -- your diocese -- that means a hand stretched forward to us from across the Atlantic....(It) gives us that sense of belonging that we have missed so much."

"(Because of this) we feel a challenge ! We must also do something for you."

"When your bishop visited us recently, he told the clergy seminar that 'God so loved the world that he did not send a committee.' I am telling you that God so loved (the Portugese Church) that he sent the PIM committee and its concerned, dynamic chairman, Canon Olifiers."

"I am very grateful to you all."

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1979 PIM Outreach to Portugal

Although no direct funding came for Partners in Mission from the diocesan budget in the past, nearly \$12,000 in gifts came from the Episcopal Churchwomen, individual parishes and organizations and the Bishop's Confirmation Class Fund in 1979.

This convention formally committed itself to the Portugese outreach by budgeting \$6,000 for assistance.

Projects accomplished during 1979 included :

- Two five-day clergy conferences for the Portugese and Spanish Churches.
- Printing the revised Portugese Catechism in Portugese.
- Provision of basic equipment for the vicar and new Holy Trinity mission at Mem-Martins.
- The gift of episcopal robes for Bishop-elect Dr. Soares.
- Major repairs to Sao Mateus Church, V.F. de Xira.
- Bishop Pereira's transportation to our convention.
- Gift of candlesticks to Sao Paulo Cathedral to commemorate the centennial of the first synod of the restored Lusitanian Church.

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